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FEATURES

REVIEW: Good food, good atmosphere, good times; you can't go wrong with dinner at Lucia's

CHRIS STEVENS | CORRESPONDENT

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The Lucia Ristorante on Mount Vernon Street in Winchester provided not just an 'exceptional' meal, but a wonderful atmosphere for diners. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

Some 34 years ago, a very good looking man invited me out to di
we went to Lucia Ristorante on Hanover Street in Boston's North

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don't remember a lot about the evening except everything was exceptional and being in the North End in evening light is almost always transformative, no matter the reason.

On a recent Saturday that same guy, now my husband of just over 30 years, and I once again found ourselves at Lucia Ristorante, but this time on Mount Vernon Street in Winchester, with a light snow falling that makes everything feel a little magical just because. And again, everything was exceptional.

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The long bar was full on our way in and still packed on our way out. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

The place was busy, which given the state of the restaurant business as of late, was really nice to see. We made a reservation so we were se immediately, also nice.

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It's a cozy space, and by that I mean you're pretty close to each other, but not so much it's intrusive.

Now what to eat! Soooo much goodness to choose from.

It would have been easy to go with Melanzane Parmigiana because I love eggplant, but my husband doesn't so I don't cook it much at home. But I felt like I needed to branch out. Should it be Pollo Francesco, (chicken, prosciutto, black olives, mushrooms and spicy marinara) or Chitarra al Tartufo (chitarra-cut pasta with wild mushrooms, sausage with white truffle oil).

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We started eating our appetizer, Carrozza, before I remembered to take a picture of it — and it. Was. Good!
WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

Did you know chitarra-cut pasta is a boxy spaghetti cut with guitar strings! I had to look it up – super cool, particularly since my husband is a guitar player, I could in theory make that, though I'm not sure how he'd feel about it.

We both also considered the Pollo Lucia, boneless chicken breast sautéed with artichoke hearts and mushrooms in a light lemon sauce, wh

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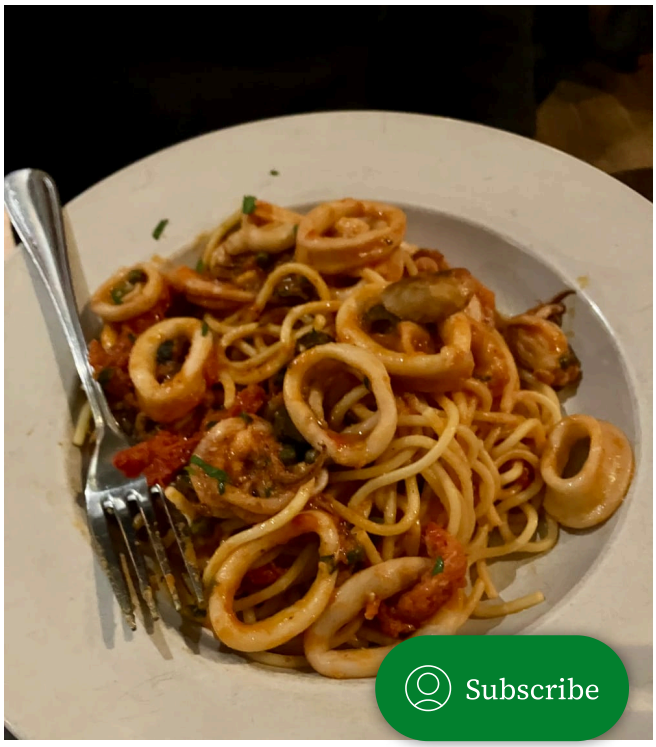
woman next to us got and it looked delicious. But in the end I got Gnocchi Spezzatino and my husband could not resist the Calamari Pirata.

But, we started out with a martini, a glass of cabernet and carrozza. Carrozza is lightly breaded and fried mozzarella stuffed with prosciutto and served in a shallow pool of marinara sauce. I want to say, think fancy mozzarella sticks, but it really is more than that.

The crunch of the breading combined with the softness of the melty mozzarella was divine, but I have to say the prosciutto was a little hard to find. That is not to say I wouldn't order it again – it was still worth the price.

As for the entrees – Rich said the calamari tasted like butter. That is high praise coming from him. I am not a calamari fan so I trusted his word.

My word can also be trusted. The gnocchi were like soft pillows of goodness (and were just as good when I finished them the next day) and the veal was perfectly soft and perfectly cooked – so good!



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The Gnocchi Spezzatino, left, was like warm little pillows of goodness and the Calamari Pirata, right, was said to have tasted like butter! WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTOS/CHRIS STEVENS

The sauce (or is it gravy?) was unassuming but in a good way. By that I mean it was very tasty, but it didn't rule the dish. I would have been happy with a few more capers. I love the zingy bit of saltiness they add to a dish but it wasn't a deal breaker. I would recommend the Gnocchi Spezzatino all day long.

But Lucia's is more than just its food. It's an experience.

The restaurant is fun with its painted ceilings and celebratory atmosphere. It is a boomy place so if you want an intimate evening maybe a Saturday night at Lucia's is not the spot.

Actually, I take that back. There was a couple in one of the rounded booths that seemed to be having a lovely, quiet time and there was another couple, just behind my husband, who despite being in the middle of a very busy dining room, was clearly in their own intimate world.

They sat close, holding hands, whispering, sharing food and those sweet gazes that have one of two impacts on the people around them; a tinge of wistfulness or the desire to yell "get a room." Good for them!

And all around them life spilled over.

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The colorful fun ceiling is just part of the experience that is dinner at Lucia's. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

We sat at a table for two against the wall and were flanked on either side by four tops with two couples each. Loud laughter punctuated the n
a party a few tables away – they were having the kind of time that made me

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want to wander over and slip into an empty seat to see what all the fun was about.

There was a girls-night-out table near the windows, a six top of mothers with kids, not an empty bar stool out front and parties everywhere of people seemingly enjoying a Saturday night out of the house. It was a happy place. It is a place for everyone.

I will admit, though, I wasn't ready to linger. If we were there with friends – or the fun table down the way, I could see ordering another bottle of wine or coffee and dessert and staying long enough to annoy the waitress, but we packed up our leftovers after dinner.

And I do mean "we." I've noticed this COVID phenomenon of wait staff bringing containers to the table for diners to pack their own leftovers has not quite waned in some places. Though I have to say, while everyone around us had their take-homes packed for them and put into nice little brown bags with handles - we packed our own.

Total shout out to the woman who was bussing the table next to ours who asked if we wanted a bag and urged us to take the bread (which was also outstanding!) with us. She was very sweet!

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You take your pick of wine at Lucia's in Winchester. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/CHRIS STEVENS

All our servers were gracious and friendly and even though we didn't order dessert, we got pizzelles with the check (which was quite reasonable)! How awesome is that?

Like the gnocchi, I would recommend Lucia's all day long. Go and enjoy, mangia!

Chris Stevens is an award-winning journalist with more than 30 years of experience. She wrote a popular weekly food and dining column for the Lynn Item and was a food reporter for Gannett Media. Read her Food Girl column here at Gotta Know Medford.

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Celebrating Black history and culture with art, reflection, and community

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: The Winchester community came together last week at the Griffin Museum of Photography for the inaugural Black History and Culture Celebration, an evening filled with music, student creativity, and powerful messages about equity, unity, and the enduring legacy of Black

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Winchester residents share more snow photos

Well, Winchester, we made it through the weekend with only a coating of snow that amounted to nothing on Sunday afternoon. But during the Feb. 22-23 blizzard, Winchester News once again asked residents to send their snow photos. And here is what we received! Solmaz Amirnazmi said her daughters and

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

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Winchester Community Music School set to expand, upgrade

The big events in Winchester Community Music School always take place in Nichols Performance Hall. With the school and its performances' growing in popularity, the hall and many of its amenities are due for an upgrade. The performance hall is one of the main areas that the school seeks to

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backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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